



National Weather Service
San Joaquin Valley
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Hanford, CA 93230-5236



Hazardous Weather Awareness Week

The National Weather Service's San Joaquin Valley office, located in Hanford, is promoting January 26th through 31st as Hazardous Weather Awareness Week.

...TORNADOES ARE INFREQUENT BUT NOT UNUSUAL VISITORS TO INTERIOR CALIFORNIA...

Over the past 9 years Interior Central California has averaged 4 tornadoes per year. The unique geography of California's Great Interior Valley provides the wind shear necessary to form and sustain tornado activity when the atmosphere becomes unstable. While San Joaquin Valley tornadoes are not as intense as their Midwest counterparts...they are nonetheless still very dangerous.

While most tornadoes in the San Joaquin Valley are classified as F0 ... or the least intense on the Fujita Damage Scale with wind estimated up to 73 mph ... there have been several F1 tornadoes with speeds estimated up to 112 mph, and infrequently F2 tornadoes with speeds to 157 MPH. More recently the Lemoore area tornadoes in November of 1996 caused damage along two paths at the Lemoore Naval Air Station with its parent thunderstorm cell also throwing 2.5 inch diameter hailstones. The Chowchilla Tornado, revised to F2 intensity, in January of 1995 threw its wood debris into houses as missiles. Perhaps the most widely publicized area tornado is the one that occurred at the Fresno Air Terminal in February of 1980. This tornado lifted the air terminal roof and moved large aircraft on the ramp. This tornado was classified as an F1 but arguably it too could be F2 on the Fujita Damage Intensity Scale.

The winter and spring months are the most likely for tornadoes to form in Interior Central California. But any thunderstorm is capable of developing tornadoes given the right circumstances. A few safety tips could prove to be life savers when these twisters threaten...

In inclement weather... Monitor NOAA Weather Radio or your favorite media news source for hazardous weather threats. ...If you find yourself in a home or building...move to a basement shelter. If such a shelter is not available...find an interior room or hallway on the lowest floor and get beneath sturdy furniture. Stay away from windows. Watch for flying debris. Finally...if you are in a mobile home...leave and seek more sturdy shelter.

For more information on San Joaquin Valley tornadoes or tornado safety information...contact the National Weather Service San Joaquin Valley Office. Contact information can be obtained through the Weather Service Internet Website at <www.wrh.noaa.gov/hanford>.

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